To Be an Adult.

The mature path of the Dhamma: Moving from childish reactivity to radical self-reliance.

Based on the teachings of Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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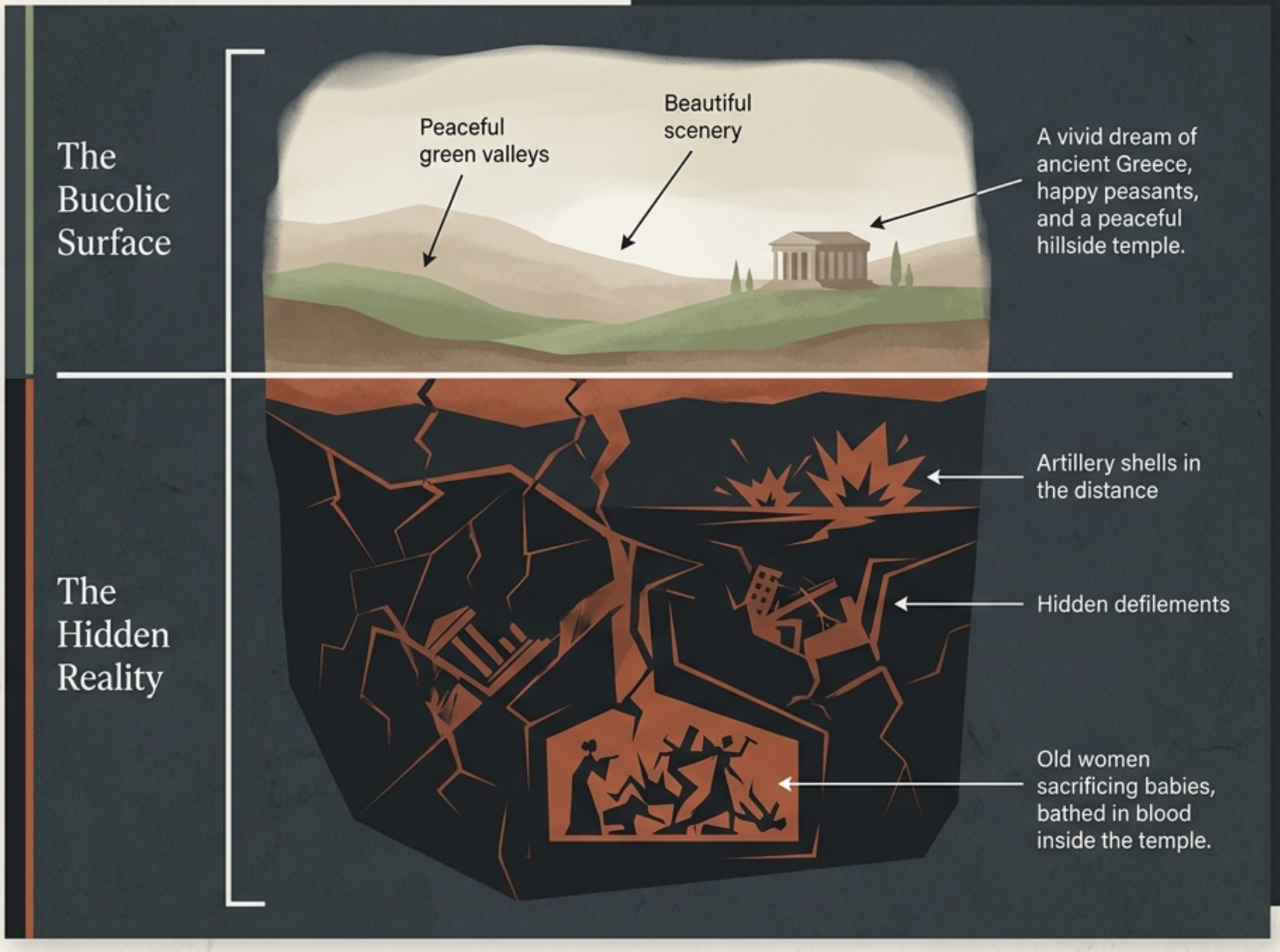
Slide design

The human world can be a very beautiful place, but this beauty often disguises profound danger.

We cannot afford to sleepwalk. We must be heedful.


The Bucolic Surface
Peaceful green valleys
Beautiful scenery
A vivid dream of ancient Greece, happy peasants, and a peaceful hillside temple.
The Hidden Reality
Artillery shells in the distance
Hidden defilements
Old women sacrificing babies, bathed in blood inside the temple.

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Where the True Danger Lies

External Action
Other People's Words (What society tells us)
The Trap
Persuasion (Convincing us that greed, anger, or indulgence are "good")
Internal Failure
Our Susceptibility (Believing the message and dropping our guard)
The Real Danger
Our Own Bad Karma (Acting on those beliefs and harming ourselves)

The Buddha taught that the real danger outside isn't what people can do to us—it's what they can get us to do to ourselves. We must look into our own minds to find where we are susceptible to harmful messaging.

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The Childish Path

- Dependence on outside powers
- Childlike devotion
- Waiting for external salvation

Mindset: Loved ones will always shelter me.

The Adult Path

- Self-reliance
- Personal responsibility
- Radical heedfulness

Mindset: Their protection only extends so far. I must depend on myself.

The self is its own Mainstay. If you don’t protect yourself, who else could your mainstay be?

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The Rahula Standard: Ethics as a Skill

Step 1:
Stop and Think
Pause before any action.
Step 2: Foresee Consequences
Will this cause harm to myself or others?
Step 3: Take Responsibility
Own both the action and its inevitable results.

When the Buddha taught his son Rahula—even at age seven—he did not teach childlike devotion. He taught the core adult skill: radical responsibility for one's actions.

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Tradition	The Goal	The Metric	The Result
Western Ethical Tradition	Pass judgment (Determine guilt or innocence)	Switches between evaluating Motivation OR Results	Action stops at the final verdict
Buddhist Ethical Training	Learn a skill (How to be skillful in thought, word, and deed)	Evaluates Motivation AND Results together	Continuous learning, refinement, and maturity

Ethics is not a courtroom designed to punish you;
it is a workshop designed to refine you.

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The Buddha taught Rahula to make his mind like Earth. The Earth does not react to the pleasant, nor does it react to the disgusting. Quick reactivity to our likes and di-dislikes is the ultimate sign of a childish. Restraint is the sign of a healthy adult ego.

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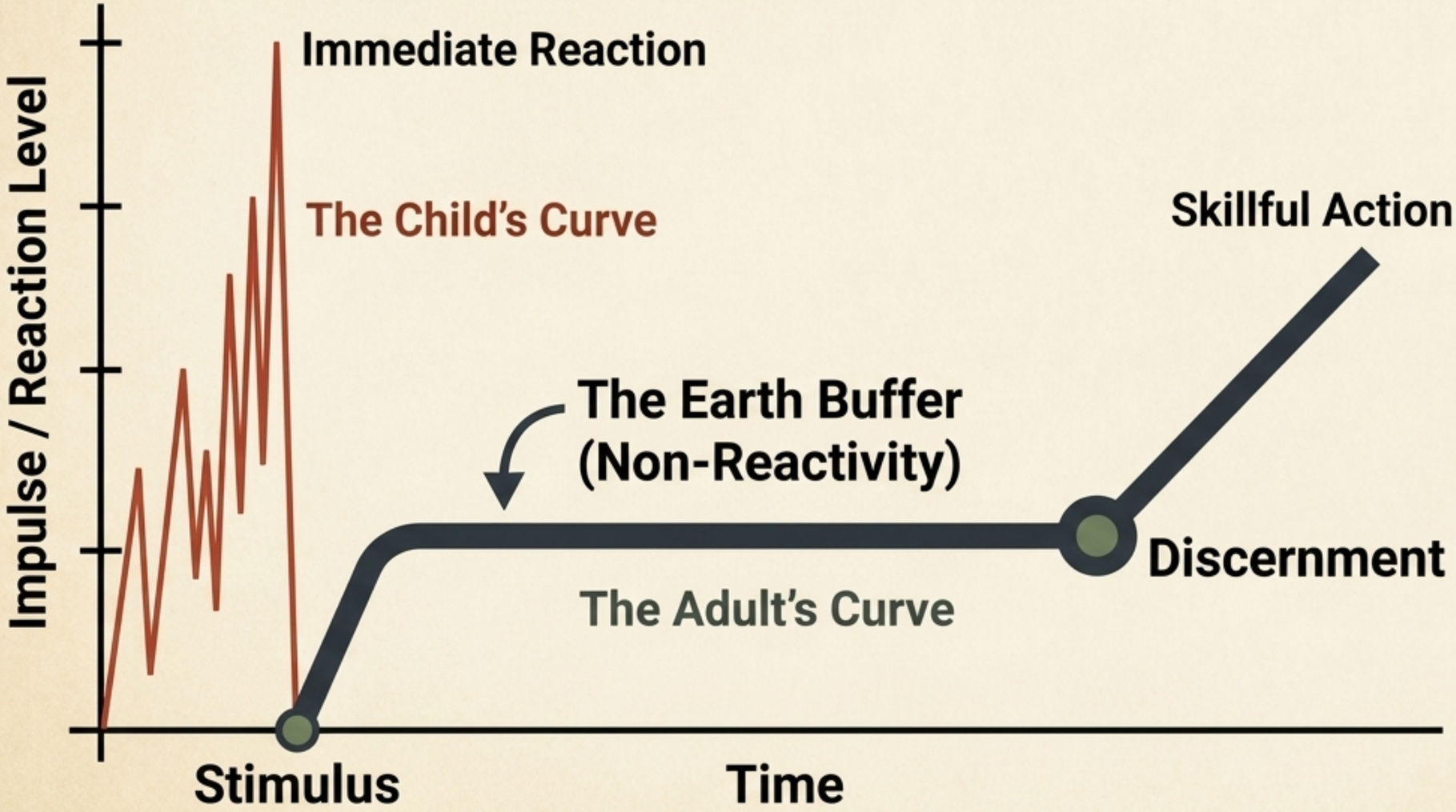
Re-defining Non-Reactivity



Non-reactivity is not about being passive or non-judgmental.

We practice non-reactivity to create the time and space required to become better judges of what should and shouldn't be done.

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The Infantilization Trap

Consumerism & Politics

Dangling flashy things: Do what we tell you, get what you want. Keeping citizens dependent and impulsive.

Historical Bias

The Song Dynasty attitude: Believing Buddhism is a weak-minded fairy tale where “good intentions” alone lead to happiness.

Watered-Down Dhamma

Creating infant-worlds: Centers with no challenges, no negative feedback, and pictures of tiny baby monks fed by children.

Society prefers adults to act like children. The real world—where people get ahead by doing harmful things—requires rigorous skill, not a fairy tale mindset.

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SYNTHESIS: The Maturity Diagnostic

Dimension of Practice	The Child Mindset	The Adult Mindset
Action	A little indulgence here and there doesn't matter.	**Every action has inescapable consequences.**
Emotion	Blown away and controlled by negative thoughts.	**Practices restraint and creates a buffer of observation.**
Security	Relies on others, systems, or higher powers for salvation.	**The Self is its own ultimate Mainstay.**
Reality	Lives in an infant-world where good intentions are enough.	**Faces a dangerous world requiring rigorous ethical skill.**

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“When trouble comes into the world, it is because of fools.”

To be an adult is to act as a firebreak. You ensure you don't pick up the fire from others, and you don't start a fire within yourself. Through generosity, virtue, and discernment, you become your own ultimate protection.

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